No. 10

amenorrhœa

An

Inaugural Dissertation

for the

Degree

of

Doctor of Medicine

Submitted to the Examination

of the

Trustees and Medical Professors

of the

University of Pennsylvania.

by Chs. Sturdivant - admitted March 8th 1821

Amenorrhœa

This term is derived from the Greek, and signifies an interruption of the menstrual discharges it is by practical writers divided into retention or remanois mensium of Latin authors, and suppression of the menses; this last division is sometimes subdivided into checked & prevented menstruation By the former we understand that the discharge from some cause is retarded beyond the period when it should make its first appearance, by the latter, that the discharge may have taken place, but has been suppressed or prevented from returning at the usual subsequent periods, from some other cause besides that of pregnancy or lactation. It might here be expected that I should consider for a moment the nature of this discharge, and the purpose which it fulfils in the animal economy; but this is a task which I most willingly resign, both from the want of talents and inclination, to those who delight in theory, and are fond of exploring the fields of uncertainty. It has long been a problem, why nature has subjected females to this discharge, and a problem, which I do not believe has ever been altogether satisfactorily explained; as numerous as the theories are

which have been started on the subject. Mr. Abernethy has ventured to give us a solution of it; his hypothesis although ingenious, has not led us entirely out of the dark on this question. He supposes, that "it relieves the irritation of the uterus, and mitigates the extreme of sexual desire, thus enabling a woman to conform to the laws of morality, and the social compacts that are established between us". Leaving Mr. Abernethy's theory to rest on its own foundation, I shall only add that I believe this discharge to be necessary, by the ordination of nature to promote health, and in some way, to contribute to conception. We reject the hypothesis of this discharge being an hemorrhage from the uterus, produced by a mechanical dilatation of the extremities of the uterine vessels, and confess it to be a peculiar, and genuine secretion; the uterus taking on the office of a gland. ~~

With these introductory remarks, I shall in as simple and concise manner as possible, give a history of the cause, symptoms, and treatment of the different forms of amenorrhœa. I proceed first to speak of retention of the menses. All females do not menstruate at the same period of life, in consequence of a difference of

constitution, some arriving at the age of puberty, much sooner than others: a different temperature of climate likewise has considerable influence in regulating the period of the first appearance of this discharge; those inhabiting warm climates being subject to it at a much earlier period of life, than those living under colder latitudes. In this country from the fourteenth to the sixteenth year, is the time when most females begin to menstruate, but as there are often deviations from this rule without any injury to the health of the female, so we cannot call every case of retention a disease because a female does not menstruate at a period which is common for most females, unless the retention be accompanied with such chlorotic symptoms, and disorder in other parts of the system as can be justly attributed to that cause. The retention of the menses seems to be owing to a want of power in the uterus, or to such deficiency of action, as prevents it from performing its healthy secretory functions; but what it is that produces this weakness and want of action at this time of life in females, appears to be a question involved in some obscurity. It is certain that there is a connection between the state of the ovaries and the process of menstruation, a defective or

morbid condition of the former being always followed by morbid symptoms in the latter; but whether this connection be mere coincidences and concomitant circumstances, or whether they are to be considered as cause and effect, I cannot positively decide. The stomach, and its assistant Chylopoietic viscera seem to exercise great agency over the uterus, since impaired digestion, anorexia, costiveness, and many symptoms of Dyspepsia usually accompany or precede this disease.

Symptoms, besides those just mentioned in the last paragraph are the following; Languor, listlessness, to exercise of any kind, debility, and a preternatural appetite for chalk lime, and other absorbents. Sometimes headache, with pain in the back, loins and hips, and acidities in the stomach. She patient is fatigued and troubled with palpitations of the heart, on the slightest exercise The pulse is quick and small, and the unhappy former often has a cough added to the catalogue of her sufferings. As the disease progresses the rose of health, the bloom of the cheek abandon their empire, and the lily's hue succeeds, the lips loose their vermillion tint, the eyes are encircled with a livid areola, and the ambrosial fragrance of the breath is exchanged for the most offen-

ous color. The countenance assumes sometimes a pale greenish complexion, and hence the name of green sickness or chlorosis of authors. Oedematous swellings, a leucophlegmatic habit, and a general debility of the whole system attend as consequences of this complaint, and hectic fever sometimes supervenes. Here concludes the history of its symptoms

Treatment. There are two indications in the cure of this disease, the first is to restore the general health and tone of the system, the second to rouse the vessels of the uterus to the due performance of their healthy secretory functions. The first indication may be effected by all those means which impart health and vigour to the system by tonics, cathartics, exercise, and a better attention to diet. I have before observed that costiveness, and much gastric derangement often accompanied this disease, on this account I deem it of service to precede the exhibition of other remedies, by a gentle emetic, it will prepare the stomach for their exhibition and give them a greater efficacy & certainty of effect.

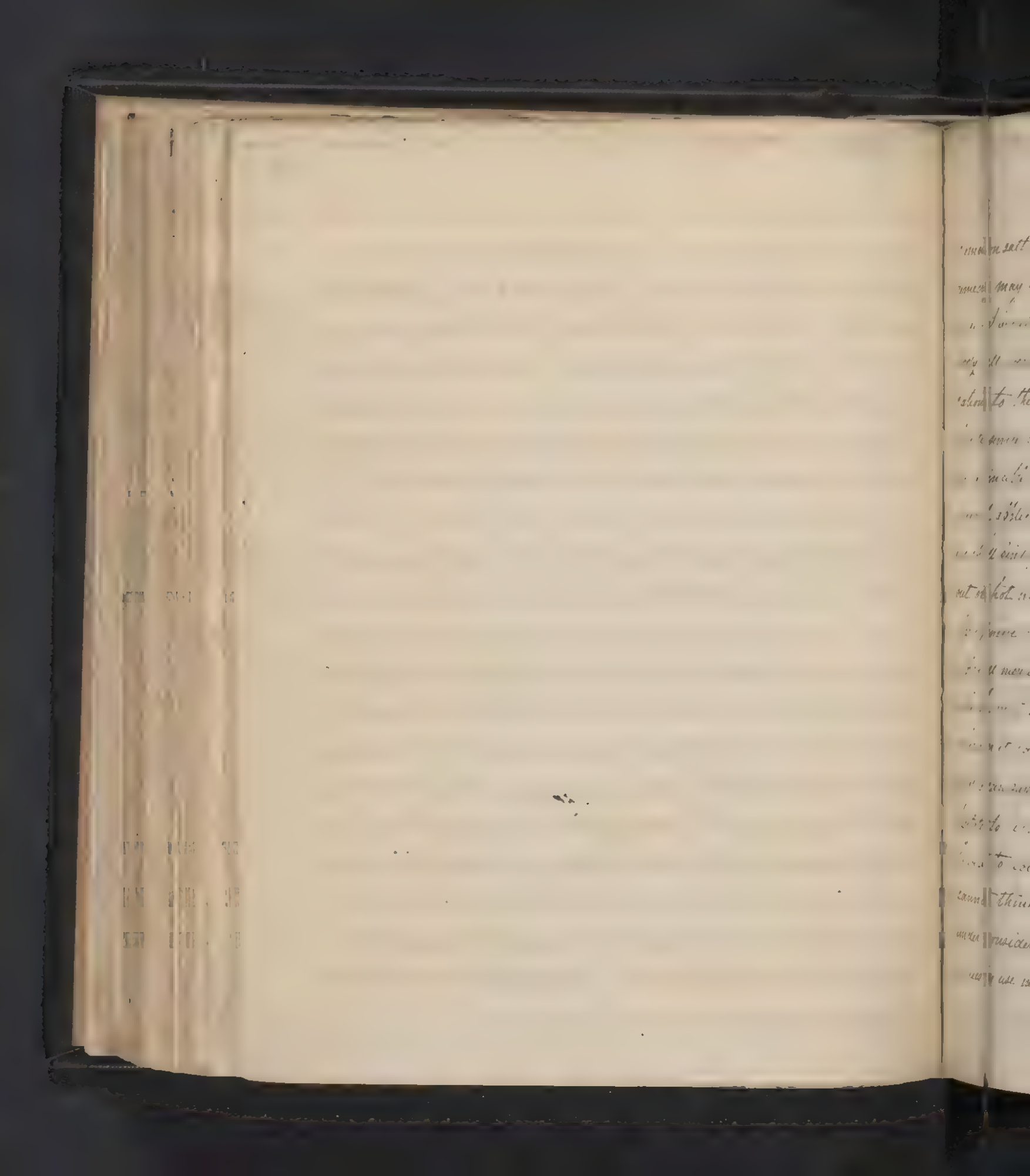
A sedative should be bled to the extent of the symptoms. These symptoms & their indications and communicate a similar [illegible] the uterus. It may in a proper place here to mention

[illegible] in the use of the
[illegible] in the use of
[illegible] in the use of
[illegible] in the use of

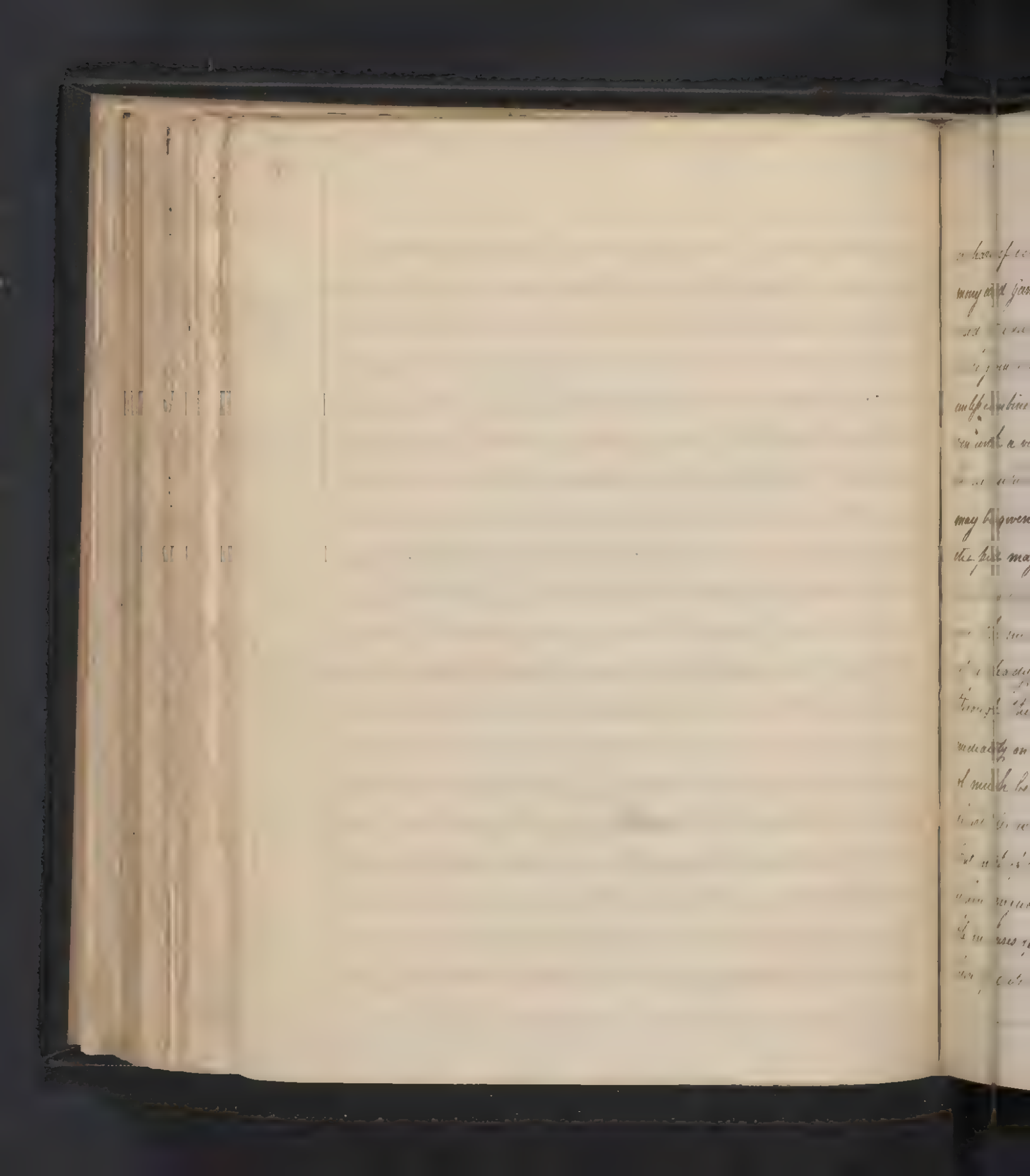
[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] [

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

the first intention of cure is to be assisted by a nutritive and digestible diet, with a sufficient quantity of drink. Milk and vegetables should compose the principal part of the nourishment; but it is not necessary to insist upon an entire abstinence from animal food. The remedies now to be mentioned belong to those not commonly prescribed for the fulfilment of the first indication; I now proceed to the second intention of cure, viz. to invigorate the action of the uterine vessels. [illegible] the cathartics generally used, the class of medicines which are called emmenagogues. That class of remedies which is most frequently mentioned in pursuing of the first intention of cure and which is to be considered as directly evacuant, I have a tendency to retain in the system as long as the state and circumstances of the patient will allow; and by promoting an excitement to the uterus, and causing it to contract. To the same end, it has been suggested to compress the iliac arteries, but Dr Hulme confessed that those few trials which he has seen made were productive of little or no benefit. The use of the warm bath is one and sometimes very might a proper to that may be ordered to the patient in this complaint. The addition of



common salt renews the efficacious. the modus operandi of this remedy may be more simple & the same humble as that of exercise. I mention this not as would to the effect of rubbing the body all over with fine soft salt. a trivial circumstance often leads to the research and the merit of the discovery would be of infinite consequence to the public. but there always can be invincible antipathy with most females to such harsh and disagreable applications and then no appearance of cure would be obtained. we shall find few who are disposed to submit to them. the cure not of high value, and applied to the diseases mostly incident to the opposite sex altogether will on this effect the medicine I shall mention is emery; this is a local remedy, it is only as such which most authors concur in recommending a this kind of evacuation whenever it can be used with propriety. I acknowledge from my own experience I can say nothing of this remedy to you in use we should always hesitate to recommend. but to [illegible] may be useful I am not inclined to doubt since it comes from very high authority. but I cannot think it so applicable in the form of evacuation now under consideration. as in the suppression of the menses. of all the remedies in use in this disturbing complaint we are most entitled to a great



a share of confidence than some of the various purgatives. Aloes scammony and gamboge are those most highly recommended. It is usual to be used to be combined to these purgatives, but balanced in the disease is to be given with the combination and recommended and even in which combination with carbonate of potash ablutions, is to be given with a view of producing the specific impression on the system the most efficient of the various purgatives may be given in combination with gamboge, or the compound ala the pill may be given Purgatives [illegible] to be given in the same manner in small doses and at such intervals as to keep a steady uniform influence on the system. Electricity passed through the region of the uterus by which so as to act immediately on the uterus instantaneously found to be productive of much benefit. Very various names have been applied to this which have been contradictorily called emmenagogues but most of these are of very little service and often so manifestly improper as only to be mischievous. They are [illegible] only more than the in cases of suppression than retention. The Polygala Senega has been [illegible] very highly recommended and is said to be useful

[illegible] mucilage, and sugar unfrequently, as it is called by. The white tincture comes to be tacked by very high testimony in its favour. It is said to [illegible] a tea spoonful, entangled in a little mucilage or syrup. There are the general remedies we have for worms, but it sometimes happens that [illegible] is [illegible] with [illegible] lumbricalis: when this is the case it will be of service to administer an emetic occasionally. The sulphate of zinc would be proper in such a case. The bowels are to be kept open, and a [illegible] laxative [illegible] with the [illegible] of worm powder be given. If pain in the side may be relieved by a blister, or some warm stimulating plaster. If cough be troublesome the squill will serve as a good [illegible] and should be persisted in as opiate at bed time. I now proceed to the consideration of the [illegible] of the [illegible].

This I have already observed is divided into [illegible] and chronic inflammation, but as this arrangement leads [illegible] we shall take the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] exactly the same. We shall speak of them both under the more general term of [illegible]. What is meant by this we have

[illegible] this blue, after it has once taken place, is not to be considered a case of suppression, [illegible] returning often regularly in some months. [illegible] a suppression of the menses from fear, mortification, [illegible] sudden suppression of the menses arises from cold, especially when the mind inactivity of the body [illegible] these causes it will be necessary to be more cautious. [illegible] and the sedatives. Symptoms connected with the [illegible] are acute and inflammatory affections a hard and frequent pulse [illegible] in the head. Each succeeding: the [illegible] sickness from colicky pains hysteric and dyspeptic [illegible] excessive discharges from the stomach, lungs and other parts of the body. The treatment is in a great many respects, [illegible] if [illegible] choroses if cast symptoms are may be viewed the same way as the like symptoms in retention of the menses, this difference however obtains that in retention, tonics and cold baths are used to be of service and emmenagogues generally injurious but in excess of this happens in suppression of the menses. When there is a pale, and dull pulse, with much excitement in the system, convulsions is a remedy from which we are to anticipate much

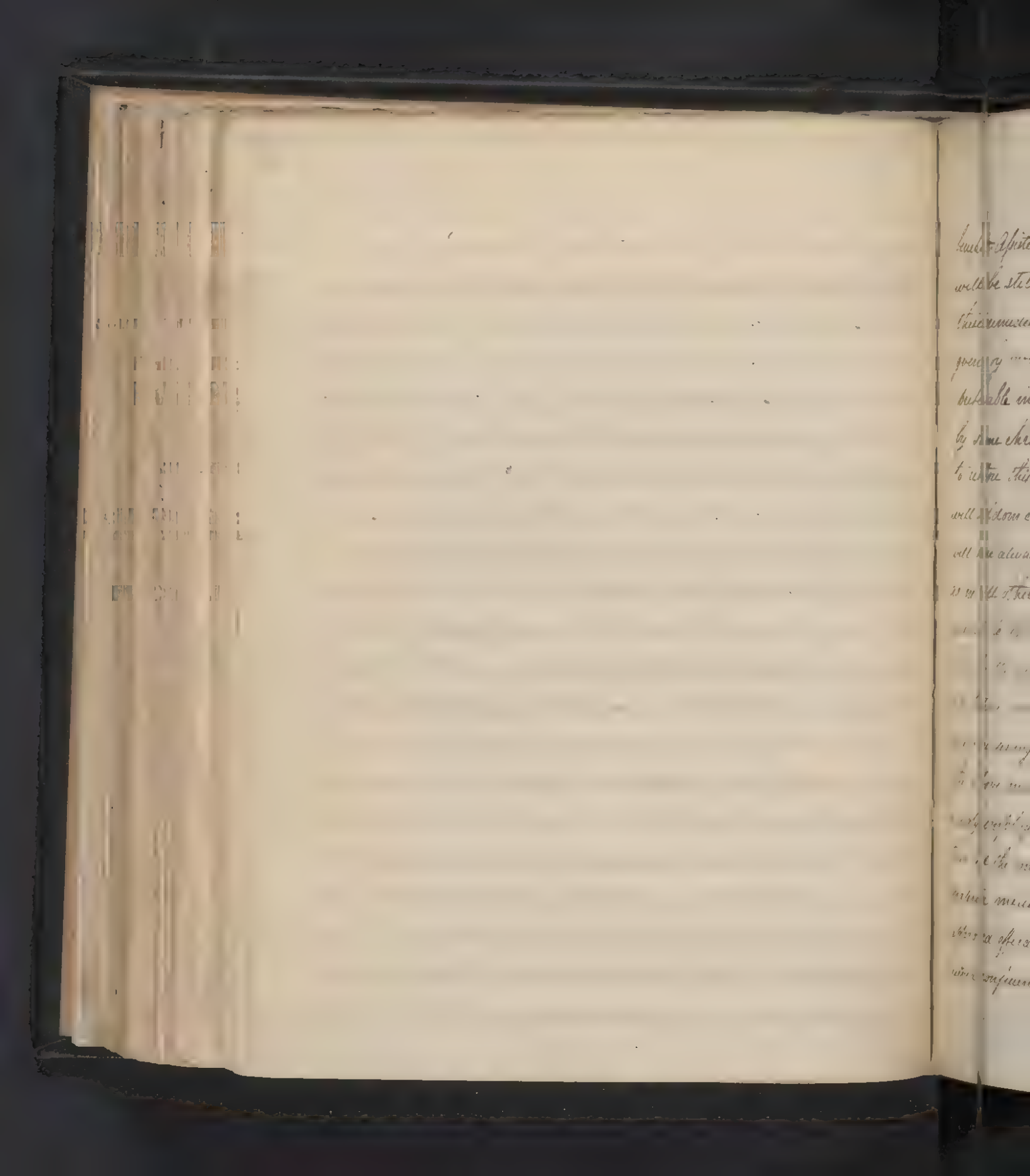
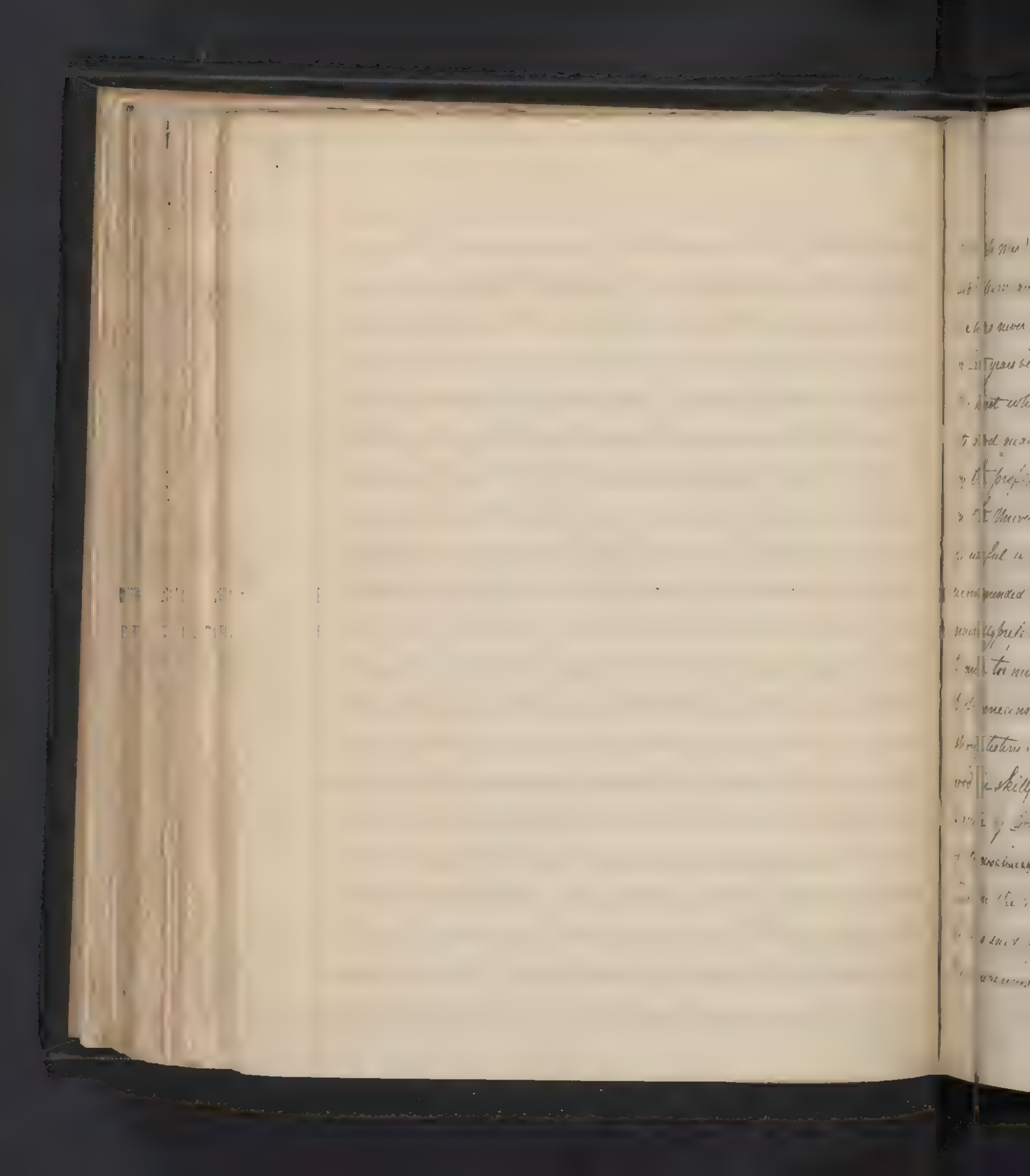


exhibit. United by the warm bath general or local, the remedies will be still more beneficial. To increase the relaxing power of these remedies, and to allay pain and irritation an enema may be given by means of a per rectum. The following method will often prove serviceable in many cases. If suppression of the menses be caused by some chronic disease or constitutional taint, an attempt to restore this discharge, more especially by stimulating medicines will seldom fail to do much mischief. The discretion of a physician will here always decide upon the method to be pursued. If suppression of the menses be caused by constitutional taint we are to look our attention chiefly to the state of the bowels. [illegible] the purgative medicines in this case. If the remedies prescribed, tonics and bitters are indicated. In coöperating with the above mentioned medicines, emmenagogues skillfully and judiciously employed demand much of our confidence. I shall not here enter into the emmenagogues mentioned by different writers on the Materia Medica, but merely notice some of those of the most decided efficacy. The tincture of guaiacum is recommended with confidence by an eminent practitioner of this place. I think



to Dr Bigelow) he says that when given in ~~cases~~ cases of ecchymosis
suppression and bereavement in for a sufficient length of time it
he has never seen it fail to bring on a discharge. The Polygala Senega has
of late years been added to the list of emmenagogues. Dr Tilton was one
of the first who proclaimed its great powers as emmenagogue and
its good qualities have since been corroborated, and promulgated
by the professors of the practice and institutes of Physic
in the University of Pennsylvania. it is supposed to be singularly
efficacious when there exists a sluggish circulation in the uterus. It is
recommended to be given in decoction or powder; the decoction is
generally preferred. Under its exhibition the system is to be attended
to, and too much excitement or debility is to be obviated by the
proper means. The juniperus sabina, mercurius dulcis rum have
strong testimonies in their favour, and they could by have done
good in skillful hands. The helleborus niger was introduced into
practice by Dr Meade as an emmenagogue, who shews unequivocally
of its discharge efficacies, and subsequent experience with this ar-
ticle in the hands of other practitioners confirms much of what
he has said of it, it is therefore worthy of a trial.
Many medicines acting directly have been exhibited in this disease,

as the new test: camphor, digitalis, nux vom., strychnine, ipecac., colchicum, or veratrum viride of which we have occasionally used extemporaneously.

Remember sometimes [illegible] with a little [illegible] of the camphor, & dispense with [illegible] & [illegible]. Then [illegible] & [illegible] & [illegible] &

domum"; the great and bountiful gift of heaven.

It is worthy of remembrance that females desirous to this object should carefully avoid all the exciting causes, cold, fear, intemperance, improper diet, and costiveness. Thus conclude the consideration of the second cause of puerperal derangement, and their treatment and shall now only add that with the utmost of moderation, a due observance on our part, and that observance of our directions on the part of the female, we may generally obtain a successful victory over that great enemy of women "with you our skill its vanquished triumph, raise our patient from the languishing bed of sickness, and restore her to health, beauty and the relations of friends and relations.

50
3
150
50
1500
1000
$500

600
100
300
500
1500
500
2000
200
2700
5000
7200